

On August 24th, Aruba will officially celebrate 200 years of Oranjestad

The celebration of Oranjestad's 200th anniversary is quickly approaching, an event that Stichting Rancho has been promoting and organizing for some time. Clifford Rosa, president of Stichting Rancho, elaborated further on the celebration and what to expect.

In connection with the 200th anniversary of Oranjestad, on May 24th, the foundation announced that they signed an agreement to use the Nikky Habibe building in Oranjestad, which will serve as the information center for the celebration.

Rosa explained that this location is special not only because it was a donation from a local merchant but also because of its historical significance, as it was one of the first supermarkets in Oranjestad.

He continued to explain that August 24th is the day they will celebrate Oranjestad's 200th anniversary. He noted that since the information center opened, they have received many visitors due to the first exhibition by the National Archives, which, along with the foundation's own portraits, illustrates the past and present. Visitors can see the difference between what Oranjestad used to be and what it has become today.

Rosa emphasized that the celebration is not just about the past and histo-



ry, but they are also thinking about what the future holds for Oranjestad. "In this regard, we are doing our work to raise awareness in our community and also engage with our community to gather more information from the people who have lived in Oranjestad," he said.

He explained that while they have information in their archives, it often does not provide the full content of what people have experienced. He mentioned that just as they did in Rancho to learn more about the history and past of Ran-

cho and to see what happened in that historic part, they are now doing the same for Oranjestad. "All of this is so we can celebrate something unique, the 200th anniversary of Oranjestad," he added.

Rosa remarked that the historical information about Oranjestad is important because they are planning for the future of Oranjestad, considering it is the capital of Aruba. He emphasized that as the capital, the city needs proper regulations and active management of the urban system, which is what Stichting Rancho is

working hard on, to ensure the capability to manage Oranjestad and make it a protected city.

"The heritage, the monuments need attention, but their history is also very important to be well documented, and that is what we are doing here at the center," he stressed.

Regarding cooperation with government departments, he mentioned that they have received support from these departments, but as for the government itself, he added that there has not been much cooperation because the foundation was informed that the government would not have much time for this celebration.

However, he highlighted that since the celebration will last a whole year, after August 24th, there could still be a process of cooperation. "A process where you have a year of celebration and many things will happen, with more awareness and education about our history, our heritage, and that is necessary," he emphasized.

Rosa indicated that they are open to providing information to various institutions and schools. He ex-

plained that they recently did a presentation together with the National Library at the homes of the elderly to see if the material they created for the presentation is suitable for educational purposes.

Unfortunately, he mentioned that they currently do not have volunteers or the manpower to go to schools or other places to give their presentations because all of this work requires a lot of planning to organize visits to schools or to bring schools to the center for a presentation.

For now, the information center is open every Friday from 6 PM onwards, where locals come to share information.

He added that if they manage to find volunteers, the goal is to open the information center from 10 AM to 2 PM, which coincides with the tram's operating hours, as this could bring both locals and tourists.

The foundation's mission is to create a joyful union and involve everyone connected to Aruba in one way or another, to contribute together and celebrate in an epic and unique way the bicentennial of Oranjestad this year. □

